



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# A World Revolving Around Salmon

## *Alaska Region Fisheries Program - Conserving fish populations for today and the future*

### **Salmon are fundamental to the economic, social, and ecological vitality of the state**

Salmon produced in rivers throughout Alaska support thriving recreational and commercial fisheries worth hundreds of millions of dollars. They are also the mainstay of a subsistence culture that has existed for thousands of years. Salmon play an important ecological role by transporting marine-derived nutrients into Alaska's freshwater ecosystems. These nutrients contribute to the productivity of Alaska's rivers, lakes, wetlands, and forests. Aquatic insects, resident fishes, juvenile salmon, birds, mammals, and man rely on healthy salmon populations. Throughout Alaska – the world revolves around salmon!

### **Threats to Alaska's salmon**

In other areas of the country, overfishing, habitat loss, thoughtless development, and the introduction of nonnative species have devastated wild populations of salmon. Alaska's salmon are subject to these same threats, though on a more limited scale.

Alaska's salmon are heavily exploited in commercial fisheries, and management decisions are often made with limited information. Public use of Alaska's rivers is increasing, resulting in streambank erosion that destroys salmon rearing habitats. Culverts, dams, and other obstructions that impede salmon migrations have been installed in some of Alaska's rivers. Establishment of nonnative species, such as

Atlantic salmon and European green crab, could threaten the status of native salmon and other aquatic organisms. Collectively these factors present a threat to Alaska's salmon resources, and the economic and ecological vitality of the state. The difference between Alaska and other parts of the country is that we still have the opportunity to protect our ecosystems while developing a diverse and healthy economy.


### **The role of the Alaska Region Fisheries Program**


The Alaska Region, Fisheries Program works with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and other partners throughout the state to conserve and restore Alaska's fish populations and aquatic ecosystems. The Fisheries Program is committed to increasing the awareness and appreciation of these resources today and in future generations.





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 **Service Fishery Resource Offices monitor salmon runs on more than 75 million acres of National Wildlife Refuge lands.** *Salmon produced on Refuge lands contribute significantly to the ecological health of Alaska and to commercial, recreational, and subsistence harvests. State and Federal fishery managers use data collected by Service fishery biologists to manage for sustainable fisheries statewide.*

 **Staff collaborate with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to identify and replace culverts that impede migrations of spawning and rearing salmon.** *Funds to replace inadequate culverts come from the Fish Passage, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and Coastal Programs, and are matched with contributions from State and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, and private industries and landowners.*

 **The Alaska Region Fisheries Program strives to improve communication and relationships with others through its environmental education and outreach activities.** *Activities occur statewide and include National Fishing Week events, partnership agreements with schools to develop aquatic education curricula, and participation in Alaska Science Camps and sportsmen's shows. Educating future generations and building coalitions with other partners to protect and conserve salmon is the only way to ensure that Alaska's future will continue to be – a world revolving around salmon.*

 **The Service's Conservation Genetics Laboratory collects genetics data on fish populations distributed across Alaska.** *These data are used for identifying rivers of origin for salmon harvested in commercial, recreational, and subsistence fisheries. Managers use this information to fulfill international treaty obligations and to protect weak stocks of salmon harvested in fisheries that target multiple populations.*

 **Oil-tanker ballast water and shipping ports are monitored for nonnative aquatic nuisance species.** *Early detection of nonnative species in ship ballasts and in the wild, will contribute to the development of measures to prevent their establishment and spread. Nonnative species introductions have had devastating ecological effects elsewhere, and if established in Alaska, could threaten Alaska's reliance on salmon. The potential for such introductions is real, given the importance of shipping for transporting logs, coal, oil and other goods between Alaska and ports in the contiguous United States and other countries.*

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